

By STUART EARP: Wycombe Wanderers 1, Slough Town 3

ONLY seven days after going out of the F.A. Cup at the first attempt, Wycombe Wanderers suffered another telling blow on Saturday when they went down to their old rivals Slough Town at Loakes Park.

When Wanderers won this corresponding game last season in the Isthmian League, they broke a run of defeats at the hands of the 'Rebels'. But now the Slough 'bogey' has cast its spell again.

The Blues can have few complaints about this defeat and in many ways it was a similar story to Minehead. They had all the pressure, especially in the second half but when it came to finishing they were distinctly second best. Slough, who hit two quick goals in the first half and missed a penalty into the bargain, survived a hectic period of pressure after the break and then broke away to deliver the killer goal during injury time.

Despite Wycombe's territorial advantage, however, the number of saves made by goalkeeper Trevor Porter could be counted on the fingers of one hand and it is this lack of power in the front line that has dogged Wanderers all season. No one wanted the responsibility of shooting on Saturday and it was plainly obvious that new blood is still needed if Wycombe are to challenge Enfield's massive lead at the top of the table.

In my view, Wanderers still want two more players — one in midfield and one in front. The most pressing problem is in the forwards. Manager John Reardon is fully aware of the situation for it was he who pointed out that the last time a forward scored in a league match was some four weeks ago. A quick glance down the leading goalscorers list reveals the same conclusion with Howard Kennedy, a midfield player, topping the chart on 12. Dylan Evans, with 10, comes next but his form had been way below the necessary standard recently. Derek Harris hasn't hit the back of the net in the league since October 1.

When the goals are not going in, it puts more pressure on the defence and they had an 'off' day against Slough. This, however, should not detract from the Rebels' performance. Once again hit by injuries which deprived them of Peter Feely and Alan Gane, they worked hard for their points and on this form will finish in a respectable mid-table position.

LED BY EXAMPLE

Skipper Terry Reardon, who would be very welcome back at Loakes Park, led by example in the centre of defence with Tim Turl while Ian Cooke provided the hard work in midfield. Dave Russell was a constant danger with his speed and Paul Lee a similar threat up front.

Wanderers made two changes from last week, John Maskell coming back in goal for the 'fluffy' Peter Spittle and Mick Holfield returning after injury at Farouk Quraishi's expense.

After early Wycombe pressure, Slough began to get into the game and Russell almost surprised the defence with a quick turn and shot which curled just past an upright. The Blues replied with a fine move when Paul Birdseye and Graham Mackenzie played a 1-2 on the edge of the box. The full back's shot was going just inside a post until Porter reacted just in time to push the ball away.

Slough went ahead after 19 minutes when the Blues defence made its first mistake. Barry Friend broke away on the top wing and curled over a cross. Maskell called but Mead was already committed and could only steer the ball into his own net.

Sensing this was the time to strike, the Rebels put on further pressure in the shape of two corners. Five minutes later they made it 2-0 when Russell headed on Friend's inswinging cross at the near post and Lee had time to stab the ball home after it had taken a deflection.

Slough's tight marking nipped a Wanderers come-back in the bud and when referee Maber awarded a Slough penalty in the

35th minute, it looked all over. Maskell charged out to the corner of his area as Lee chased a through ball and as the 'keeper stuck out a leg, Lee went tumbling. With regular penalty taker Alan Gane not playing, Keiron Somers was given the job but looked unaccustomed to the role. He took only three paces back from the ball and then sent it trickling past the right hand upright — a real let-off for the Blues.

Holfield and Evans both sent in crosses as Wanderers strove to get back in the game before the break but the nearest they came was a Roger Day shot that struck an upright in the 37th minute.

Wycombe had to wait until the 52nd minute to pull a goal back after Porter had been penalised for 'steps'. Kennedy acted as a decoy as Day pushed the free kick to Birdseye and when his shot was blocked, Holfield was there to stab the ball over the line.

It was the signal for a fierce assault from the Blues with Porter saving bravely at Kennedy's feet and then pushing over Mackenzie's drive. But Slough held on and began to look more and more dangerous on the break. Lee got away in the 75th minute and saw his shot

deflected onto the woodwork.

Still pressing, Wanderers powered forward but it was significant that their most dangerous player was the overlapping Birdseye. Reardon prevented a certain equaliser in the 81st minute when heading off the line from the full back's cross.

SIMPLE GOAL

The match was settled beyond doubt in the second minute of injury time when Kennedy obstructed Lee inside the box. I thought it was a penalty but it made little difference as Friend chipped the ball over to the unmarked Somers who won't score a more simple goal all season. He headed in from two yards with the defence standing like statues.

Porter saved from substitute Tony Horseman in the fifth minute of stoppage time but by then Slough were home and dry.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies, H. Kennedy, R. Day (sub A. Horseman 73 mins), G. Mackenzie, D. Evans, D. Harris, M. Holfield.

SLOUGH: T. Porter, R. Mackay, T. Reardon, T. Turl, R. Underwood, D. Russell, I. Cooke, R. Horstead, B. Friend, K. Somers, P. Lee, Sub W. Clift (not used).

Referee: T. Maber (Ruislip).
Half-time: 0-2. **Goalscorers:** Slough — Mead o.g. (19), Lee (24), Somers (92).
Wycombe — Holfield (52).

Attendance: 1,200.



Former Wanderer Terry Reardon puts the ball into touch despite pressure from Alan Phillips during Saturday's game.